

The Glasgow Keelie

WEDNESDAY 1 MAY 1991.

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DEATH ON THE CLYDE

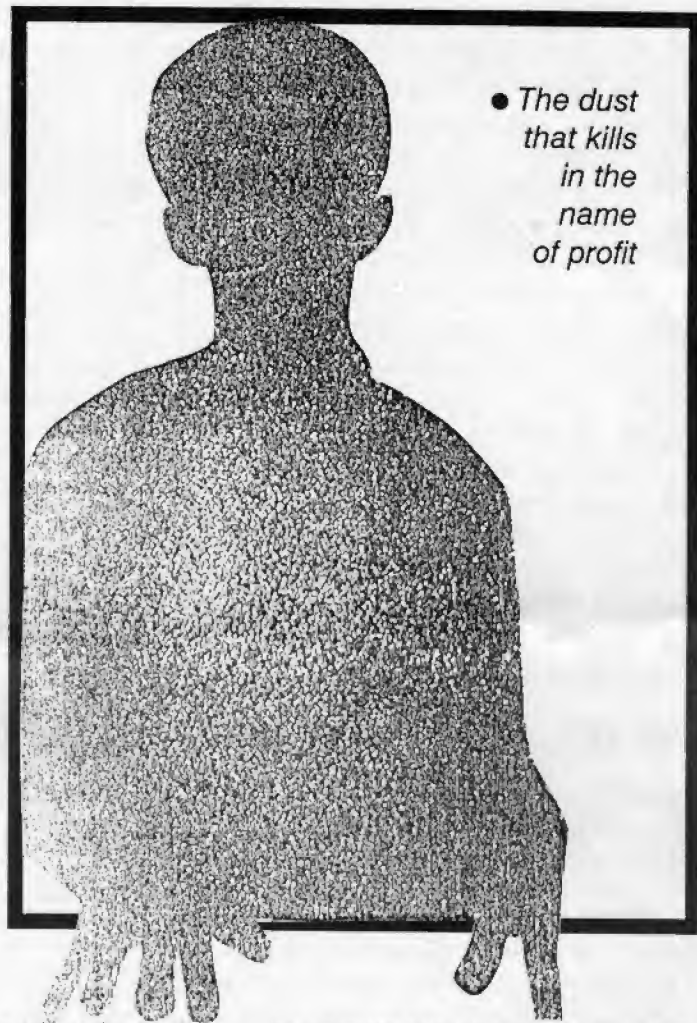
The headline above was selected by a voluntary worker at Clydeside Action on Asbestos, a small office down by the Briggait. In deference to him *The Keelie* has used it. But if anything the headline understates the case: it could read **MURDER ON THE CLYDE**. Like the rest of his colleagues the voluntary worker is a victim of asbestosis, a former shipyard worker on the Clyde.

The ramifications surrounding asbestos and the asbestos industry are very intricate. It is a complex and murky world of suppression, of official deals and counter deals, political corruption at local and national level. One thing is clear; what is happening in this country is an obscenity. A political obscenity and a social obscenity.

Asbestos attacks the lungs, colon, larynx; stomach, chest and heart. Those suffering from mesothelioma have to confront the fact that this disease has no known cure. In the past year alone three hundred of those who

came to Clydeside Action on Asbestos have died of asbestos-related diseases. They came looking for support in their fight for some sort of justice. They sought cash allowances under the Diseases Benefit Scheme run by the DSS, or financial compensation for themselves and their families from the big business interests responsible for their plight. If successful they would have received a pittance; in far too many cases they received nothing at all. Many of those who died were aware of the reality facing them, they knew it was a matter of time.

A large proportion of victims are former shipyard workers, especially joiners, electricians and pipelaggers; men whose daily work put them in direct contact with asbestos dust. But beyond this particular group there are thousands of others. The figures are so vast and the stakes so high that the true facts about what is happening are suppressed. Not only facts about the figures involved, but facts about how our society treats these victims. For thousands of shipyard workers society's "reward" for the years they spent building the "best ships in the world" is acute physical suffering and an early death. They must also confront the fact that the entire system is rigged to stop them getting a just settlement. Without the support of their fellow victims at Clydeside Action on Asbestos the chances of receiving anything is extremely remote.



● *The dust
that kills
in the
name
of profit*

To give an idea of the kind of money involved: the Duke and Duchess of Westminster alone pay around £13.5 million each year into a fund designed to STOP justice being done. The money from this family of aristocrats and the other big shareholders - as well as the rest of the wealthy people whose financial interests are tied in with asbestos claims - constitutes an enormous slush fund. If you consider that one firm (Turner & Newall) had to fork out £11.4 million on claim settlements for last year alone then you have some idea of the cash involved. If that's what they were forced to pay what sort of claims did they manage to avoid?

This slush fund will operate like any other slush fund. Just where the money goes is uncertain. But it exists for one purpose: to check the rightful compensation claims of thousands and thousands of people. The process involves a variety of groups; lawyers, solicitors, doctors; insurance companies and diverse bureaucrats, the DSS and agencies of the Social Works Department, etc. The slush fund is used to affect that process. The people targeted by those in control of the slush fund will include the professional groups referred to.

In future issues *The Keelie* will try to highlight some of the battles being fought by the victims. In deference to the voluntary team at Clydeside Action on Asbestos it is crucial that the public be made aware of the part played by the DSS. (See page 2.)

MAY DAY

THE PEOPLE'S DAY

For the dwindling band of workers who march behind the official banner and gather round the official platform on the first Sunday of May there will be no mention of the class struggle. The labour movement will be mobilised, not for strike action, boycotts and mass struggle, but simply to ensure that Mr Kinnock is elected to No.10.

Yet in the twelve bitter years of Thatcher, this same Mr Kinnock, and practically the whole of the labour and trade union movement, failed miserably to offer any serious challenge as the Tories heaped up anti-working class legislation at an unprecedented rate. Instead, the la-

bour and trade union leadership reserved their fury for any union, like the NUM, that dared take up the strike weapon in defence of its members' rights.

There were moments when Thatcher was in deep trouble - the miners' strike, the inner-city riots, the Falkland's war and the struggle at Wapping - yet on each occasion the pathetic labour leadership, her Majesty's loyal opposition, continued with the parliamentary con game and let the Tories off the hook.

The one and only occasion when Thatcher was decisively defeated was not in parliament. It was when the people themselves came onto the streets, invaded town halls and refused en masse to pay the poll tax. That should tell us all we need to know. Direct Action works.

Let the Left in Glasgow exert its influ-

ence now, as it did in March 1990 with the magnificent anti-poll tax rally. Remember it was not parliament that abolished the poll-tax - it was the people who refused to pay and came out onto the streets to voice their protest.

It is time to speak out again - against widespread DSS poverty, unemployment and homelessness; against Tory attacks on the Health Service and Education; against corruption in the District Labour Council; against the betrayal of the Kurds and all manifestations of racism at home and abroad.

On this MAY DAY 1991 it is 200 years since Tom Paine published 'The Rights of Man'. Let us raise the old battle cry once again.

**WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE,
YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT
YOUR CHAINS!**

THE SCANDAL OF DSS ADJUDICATING OFFICERS

The DSS is an arm of state-control, a sort of secret police. Its workers sign the Official Secrets Act and it's got priority over almost every other government agency. There's one astonishing power it has in relation to the claims of the victims of asbestos-related diseases. Getting the allowances due to you is a long and complicated process. The DSS requires proof that the disease you have is an effect of asbestos. This means consultation and examination with many different doctors: your own G.P., three from the pneumoconiosis panel-board plus three or more at the respiratory department at the Royal Infirmary (which is a tougher test than qualifying for the Olympic Games). Sometimes the claimant must undergo a biopsy to provide proof to the authorities. Or to undergo two biopsies. Sometimes even three biopsies.

Let's be clear about what a biopsy is; it is a major operation; the patient goes under the knife. The medics search inside your lungs and other parts of your body for traces of dust. A great many patients die as a result of these biopsies. In some cases the death rate is a staggering 7 out of 10. Thus in the act of providing 'proof' of their condition to the DSS they end up being killed. The record is so gruesome that experienced workers at Clydeside Action on Asbestos advice

claimants to steer clear of the operating table. Those who refuse the biopsy are known by the authorities as 'Hostile Patient'.

However, many are 'obliged' to endure the operation. If you survive that ordeal, and the rest of the medical rules and regulations, you're then faced with the ultimate test. The ultimate test is the DSS. For the purpose of the Diseases Benefit Scheme the person who finally decides if a victim suffers from an asbestos-related disease is not a doctor, nor is it two doctors, nor is it even seven doctors. The final judge is the Adjudicating Officer at the DSS. He or she holds absolute and discretionary power. This DSS official takes the findings of the medical profession and then decides if the victim should receive the pittance of an allowance due to those afflicted by asbestos-related diseases. It doesn't matter if your own G.P. tells you that you have asbestosis. The Adjudicating Officer decides whether you've got it 'officially'.

Who is the Adjudicating Officer? Nobody knows. Their identity is a closely guarded secret. We do know that the role shifts. Different workers get the job on a day-to-day basis. Some of them are little more than school-leavers. In other words a boy or girl of 18 or 19 can be Adjudicating Officers. They 'examine' the findings of the medical profession then award or reject individual claims.

It gets worse. During last year's cultural 'celebrations' in Glasgow a celebration of a different kind took place at a well-known hotel on the southside of the city. It was quite an exclusive wee party. Members of the DSS only. Prizes were being dished out. One went to the Adjudicating Officer who had rejected the most claims and therefore saved the department the most money. We don't know whether Mrs Thatcher or Michael Forsyth or Ian Lang or the

Duke of Westminster or representatives from major insurance companies like Lloyds of London attended the ceremony though no doubt their good health was toasted by the civil servants who did turn up. This horror story is happening in Glasgow right now.

Our Labour District Council was responsible for 'awarding' Frank Sinatra close on a million quid for a day's work then lost a cool £10 million on a 9-month temporary heritage exhibition. All done to attract big business to the city. But what happens to the victims of big business? The same Council gives a miserly £750 to Clydeside Action on Asbestos while their Strathclyde Regional 'comrades' gave a paltry £1000. It is a shocking and disgraceful state of affairs.

IMMEDIATE SUPPORT AND SOLIDARITY!

Clydeside Action on Asbestos is unable to register as a charity. From their paltry budget they must pay rates and rents on top of everything else, eg. electricity, telephone, stationery; heating, furniture, photocopying, general office and travel expenditure. This is patently impossible on the pathetic grants they get from District and Region.

**Clydeside Action on Asbestos
needs immediate support and
solidarity from the people of
Glasgow and elsewhere in
Scotland. Clydeside Action On
Asbestos, 15 St. Margaret's Place,
Glasgow G1 5JY.**



TELLING THE TEACHERS

The Regional Council proposed to close both the state/protestant school and the catholic school in the Cranhill area.

The local kids showed the adults the non-sectarian alternative by striking for a joint school, in spite of sever objections from the catholic hierarchy and the Regional Council.

Congratulations Cranhill!

THE POWERCARD CON

H.M. Government has already spent an obscene amount of money advertising the coming privatisation of the two Scottish electricity companies. The campaign is rife with Kitsch images of tartanry, heather, Bonny Prince Charlie and Nessie. But there is another campaign about which they've been less than forthcoming. Yes, folks, we're talking about none other than the Great Power-Card Con. This has gained momentum as the sell-by-date approaches. It's aimed at the poorest, most vulnerable section of society and allows Scottish Power to avoid responsibility when disconnecting domestic supplies.

It's a neat P.R. exercise but these are the facts it seeks to cover.

A power-card costing £5 buys 71 units of electricity but this is only after hidden charges are deducted. Standing Charges: charges for equipment amount to £5 a week. So for £5 worth of electricity you need two power cards. There are also deductions for arrears. The emergency button which allows £14 worth of electricity has to be repaid immediately - by purchasing power cards to the accumulated debt!

And if you're fortunate enough to find yourself in credit because the meter has been wrongly set you will not be paid in cash, but in kind, i.e. with power cards! If you use no electricity at all you are still in debt to Scottish Power for the use of equipment they have forced on you in the first place! And is all designed to keep potential shareholders happy. And just who is paying for the bonus-shares on offer if you register for a prospectus? Well, maybe we should just "ask Sid".

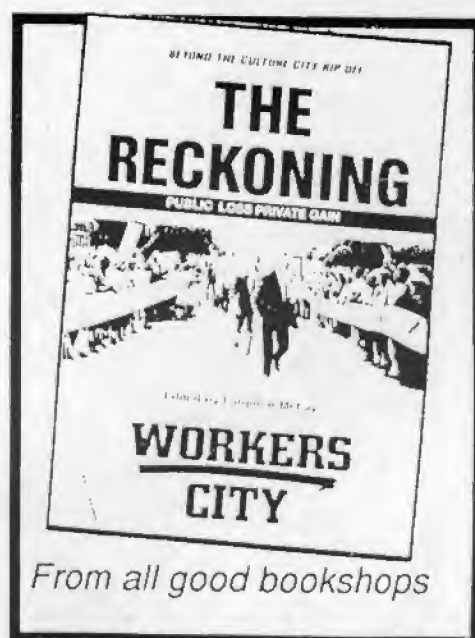
Rights and Privileges

During the past dozen years the national government has been transforming the few rights held by the public back into privileges.

Marking the 200th anniversary of the publication of *The Rights of Man* they have achieved this transformation with the collusion of their 'bitter enemies', the Labour Party, nowadays more aptly defined as Her Majesty's Most Loyal Opposition.

It is important to here recognise the rights referred to are not 'principles', but aspects of actual existence. Since time immemorial people have fought and died for them. They have

been killed for them. They still are, not only abroad but in this country, on picket-lines and demonstrations - or even just out walking, if you happen to be the 'wrong' colour. Nothing was ever given freely by the ruling class. Not in this country, not in any country. When left with no alternative they concede. If given the chance what they concede they retrieve, they fight to get it back. The struggle for human rights; outside of the power structure this is what most people mean when they refer to 'politics'. If the Labour Movement was ever about anything then surely it is that.



STINKY CITY

For the folk who live in Sighthill the dear green place, often means something other than the Kingdom of Strathclyde and the splendour of its sweep to the Firth of Clyde and out to the oceans beyond. For them it is more like the Pongdom of Strathclyde as their heads swim every day in the fumes of the Stinky Ocean; the St. Rollox Chemical Pond. Founded by Charles Tennant in 1797, the St Rollox Chemical Works became the largest of its kind in Europe eventually closing down in 1964.

Known locally as the Stinky Ocean, the Pinkston Bog was the dumping ground for 3,000,000 tons of toxic and odorous waste which the chemical works produced in the 150 years up the environmental controls.

Given this information, no one in their right mind would go near the site. That is unless you are from the Planning Department of the Labour-controlled Glasgow District Council and have the problem of housing the loyal people who keep you in office.

By the 1980s the people of Glasgow were aware of the morally corruptible and cowardly manner in which the District Council went about their business. Much publicised are the problems of living in the industrial homelands of the peripheral housing schemes. Their cynical indifference was more easily observed with their accusation that it was the breathing habits of the tenants of the Hutchie 'E' flats that caused the dampness which caused them to be demolished.

The same indifference was obviously the virtue that allowed them to buy land that is so clearly unfit for human habitation; then in 1968 build a huge high rise housing

scheme on it. How is it possible to imagine that the tenants of Sighthill would not care about being dumped, just like the waste, on a foul smelling bog?

Once again we see Glasgow District Council playing the capitalist lackey under the banner of Socialism. Why do they continue to blacken the lives of the folk who support them?

The people of Glasgow are now seeing them for what they are; a gang of career-minded, business-bought charlatans who are a disgrace to the city they are supposed to serve.

It is time for the tenants of Sighthill to unite and organise themselves to highlight the highrise height of nonsense which led to their pungent plight.

It is worth looking into the possibilities of legal action against the Council as this is clearly a case of foul play which stinks of criminal negligence.

THE GORBALS STORY CONTINUED

Who is the real power in the Gorbals? Councillor "Flash" Mutter or his election agent "Lucky" John MacPherson? - This is the last time he'll be known as "Lucky". He has objected. So have the locals across in the Gorbals who want him known by his local nickname, "The Skunk" - because everything he gets involved in stinks to high heaven.

There are benefits to being Mutter's election agent:

(a) You get automatically appointed (not elected) to various pet schemes of your councillor.

(b) Your extended family gets automatically re-housed within a stone's throw of where you live (unlike the unfortunate residents of the old Hutchie E site and Queen Elizabeth Square who

always seem to lack the necessary connections - sorry, points).

"The Skunk" is Vice Chairperson of the New Gorbals Housing Association. He is also a board member of Gorbals Initiative for Training and Employment and a member of the Gorbals Development Committee - co-incidentally, his daughter is a paid employee of this group. "The Skunk" is also a committee member of Hutchesontown Leisure Halls. And Chairperson of the Gorbals Unemployed Workers' Centre. By the way, in his previous stint in this "job" he was forced to resign after it was discovered one of his relations somehow managed to submit the lowest tender to recover their pool table. On that occasion "The Skunk" was last seen scurrying around with £20, trying to present it to "Centre Funds" as a "donation from the winning tender". Now that he's back in "his" position the Chairperson he's been seen at the centre doing deals with Christian D'or suits! (What's the label inside "Flash" Mutter's jacket?)

Locals are further interested to know what happened to the video recorder that was recently from the centre. He knows a lot about "give and take". And what's that other rumour hitting the Florence Street bistros? Something to do with briefcases. You give somebody a briefcase and

they give you one back. Just blink and it's done. But what was inside the briefcases? Just follow the smell ... that's what a certain black Labrador dog seemed to be doing.

What sort of organisation has the Labour Party degenerated into when people like MacPherson hold such power? But word is out from the City Chambers. There's going to be expulsions. Who will the party expel? Will it be the rogues and villains? Or will it be the ordinary rank and file who are trying to pull the plug on all the corruption?

Further revelations in the next Keelie.

THREATS

It has come to our attention that individuals ready to expose corruption such as we have highlighted in the Keelie in this and other issues, have come under threat by certain members of the Hutchesontown/Kingston Labour Party.

We have said it before. And now we wish to emphasise it again - The Keelie will not be intimidated into silence.

A broadsheet like The Keelie exists to expose local corruption. We shall continue to do so without fear or favour.

